

## **KNOW THE FACTS**

### **Understanding Immigration**

Immigration has shaped American history, and immigrants are a fundamental part of our social fabric. Yet, popular discourses have painted international migration as a growing concern, nurturing all sorts of anti-immigrant sentiments. Consequently, many of us are divided between appreciating and fearing what immigration came to represent. The Immigration Committee is working on a series of informative posts about contemporary immigration challenges, and we invite you to think about immigration myths and facts. This month, we will be looking at **immigration and the economy**

#### **MYTH: “Immigrants don’t pay taxes”**

The “immigrants don’t pay taxes” myth is most likely rooted in the assumption that immigrants who receive cash for work do not pay federal taxes. There are several issues with that myth:

- Most immigrants currently in the United States are documented, and actively participate in our economy. In addition to the general benefits of paying their fair share (having proof of income for buying a house, for example), immigrants have a further incentive to pay federal taxes: those who intend to apply for citizenship are expected to present at least 5 years of their federal income taxes to have their petitions examined by USCIS.
- All immigrants, whether documented or not, help to fund our local governments through sales taxes, ad valorem taxes, and utility and public service taxes. In fact, in a study about the top 10 revenue sources funding the Town of Jupiter, Jim Kuretski (city councilor) found that immigrants contributed to every one of those sources.
- Immigrants living in Florida have a spending power of more than \$90 billion dollars and, according to the New American Economy, they pay nearly \$29 billion in taxes each year. It is exactly because immigrants pay taxes and support our economy that leaders across the political spectrum signed the **Florida Compact on Immigration**. <https://www.flcompact.org/compact>

#### **FACT: Florida’s economy depends on immigrants**

While we know that immigrant labor and taxes nurture our economy, we also know that immigrant criminalization often incurs significant costs. If we examine SB168, for example, a bill that passed this legislative session, we know that:

- SB 168 requires that the local police detain immigrants (without due-process) in our local jails. This will cost our local government a substantial amount of money that will not be reimbursed by the Federal government.
- 25% of Florida’s businesses and workforce are made of immigrants. The culture of fear created by SB168 is expected to cause an exodus of mix-status families –those who have both documented and

undocumented immigrant family members. Using the effects of a similar anti-immigrant law passed in other states, it's expected that this exodus will result on \$1.4 billion loss in wage earnings.

- We estimate that Florida will lose an additional 30,000 jobs due to SB168. In Palm Beach County alone, we have more than 10,000 immigrant entrepreneurs, who propel our economy as employers and as consumers.
- By driving immigrants into the shadows, SB168 will discourage them from participating in the Census. Because our demographic growth in Palm Beach County is attributed to immigration, our federal funding and congressional representation will be jeopardized if immigrants are not properly counted.

Sources:

1) <https://research.newamericaneconomy.org/report/economic-cost-of-florida-senate-bill-168-and-house-bill-527/> 2) <https://www.fwd.us/action/defeat-sb168/> 3) <https://www.sun-sentinel.com/opinion/commentary/fl-op-com-sanctuary-census-20190420-story.html>

4) <https://www.miaminewtimes.com/news/miami-police-chief-jorge-colina-slams-florida-anti-sanctuary-city-bill-sb-168-11127176>